

REMARKS

The office action of October 30, 2003, has been carefully considered.

It is noted that claims 1-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph.

Claims 1-4 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) over the patent to Rick (US 6,501,370).

Finally, it is noted that claims 5-20 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form and to overcome the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph.

In view of the Examiner's rejections of the claims, applicant has canceled claim 2 and amended independent claim 1.

It is respectfully submitted that the claims now on file particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Applicant has amended claim 1 as suggested by the Examiner.

In view of these considerations it is respectfully submitted that the rejection of claims 1-20 under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph is overcome and should be withdrawn.

The presently claimed invention is directed to a locking device for a force locking connection between a clamping jaw and a steering column. As shown in attachment 1, due to a force 30, indicated in red, the clamping jaws 21,22, shown in yellow, are in a release position and not against the steering column 10. A gap 31, shown in green, is present between the jaw flange and the steering column. By way of a control device a motor 48, shown in blue, is activated and a wedge 40 is driven. The wedge presses the clamping jaws 21,22 against the steering column and locks it. In the lock position the steering wheel can no longer be turned. The advantage of the present invention is that the locking condition is obtained without having to displace the steering column. The locking condition is only achieved after the control device gives a corresponding command to the motor 48. If a total failure of the vehicle electronics occurs the release force 30 separates the jaws and allows the steering column to turn.

It is respectfully submitted that the claims presently on file differ essentially and in an unobvious, highly advantageous

manner from the constructions disclosed in the references.

Turning now to the references and particularly to the patent to Rick '370, it can be seen that this patent discloses a vehicle anti-theft apparatus and method. An important objective of the Rick device is to automatically lock and prevent movement of the steering column when the vehicle is turned off and the electronic circuit is broken. As shown in attachment 2, a spring 68, shown in red, pushes a clamping jaw 66 against the steering column 13. When the engine is started an electromagnet 59 and oil pressure 64, 65 of the engine, both shown in blue, work against the force of the spring to loosen the clamping jaws from the steering column.

Thus, the force of the spring in Rick serves to automatically lock the steering column. In order to release the clamping jaws it is necessary to start the engine and the electronics of the vehicle. In the presently claimed invention, on the other hand, the clamp has an inherent release force that pushes the jaws apart whereby the steering column can still be freely turned after the engine is turned off. The steering column is only locked after the electromotor is driven. This is quite the opposite of the operation of the Rick device. Thus, Rick does not disclose the presently claimed invention.

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In view of these considerations it is respectfully submitted that the rejection of claims 1-4 under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) over the above-discussed reference is overcome and should be withdrawn.

Reconsideration and allowance of the present application are respectfully requested.

Any additional fees or charges required at this time in connection with this application may be charged to Patent and Trademark Office Deposit Account No. 11-1835.

Respectfully submitted,

By 

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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, PO Box 1450 Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on January 30, 2004.

By: 
Friedrich Kueffner

Date: January 30, 2004